SEA CREATURELY: CARLO CRIVELLI'S *PORTO SAN GIORGIO ALTARPIECE* (1470)

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Resumo | Abstract

Recent years have seen a considerable increase in research on the extraordinary Venetian artist Carlo Crivelli (c.1430-92), which frequently emphasises his participation in a regional style — the *stile adriatico*. This stylistic grouping, unlike much traditional art-historical categorisation, is not oriented around national or civic entities, but instead around a more fluid body, namely the Adriatic Sea. Scholars have provided compelling evidence for the heightened mobility of artists facilitated by this body of water, and have demonstrated the abundance of shared artistic concerns across its opposite shores during the fifteenth century, emphasising cultural commonalities — although, as its histories of fragmentation show, it is far from a politically unified region. Maritime mobility was central to life in the Adriatic, yet few scholars have addressed the ways in which the sea itself was imagined in the art of this region. Addressing this gap, this paper will examine a 1470 altarpiece by Carlo Crivelli known as the *Porto San Giorgio Polyptych*, in terms of the way it mediated the relationship between its beholders in the coastal town of Porto San Giorgio, and the sea. Through its representation of a Virgin and Child seated amidst composite sea creatures, shells, and luxury textiles redolent of water, as well as its specific address to migrant communities from across the region, I argue that the altarpiece produced a distinctive sense of maritime place broad enough to accommodate several plural and overlapping identities in this region.

Palavras-chave | Keywords

Mobility; Adriatic; Crivelli; maritime region.

Resumo biográfico | Short biography

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